

# snippets

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# On *remind-me* presuppositions and embedded question acts

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Sauerland and Yatsushiro (2017) provide a convincing account of *remind-me* presuppositions. In (1), such a presupposition is triggered by *again*.

- (1) What is your name again?

They argue that these support the syntactic representation of the questioning speech act as in (2), since *again* scopes between the underlined speech act components. The paraphrase is mine.

- (2) Imp2 *again* (CG (what your name is))  
'I want you to bring about that we/I know again what your name is.'

Sauerland and Yatsushiro (2017) show that German *remind-me* presuppositions occur in embedded interrogatives under circumstances analyzed by Krifka (2001, 2003) as embedded question acts, as in (3a), contrasting with (3b):

- (3) a. Lina will wissen/fragt sich was (noch mal) Dein Name ist.  
Lina wants know/asks herself what (again) your name is  
'Lina want to know/wonders what your name is (again).'
- b. Lina weiß/verkündet was (#noch mal) Dein Name ist.  
Lina knows/announces what (#again) your name is  
'Lina knows/announces what your name is (#again).'

The notion of embedded question acts goes against a classical view that only unembedded structures can constitute speech acts. However, the evidence from *remind-me* presuppositions is striking and converges with a range of compelling arguments by Krifka (2001, 2003). I extend these minimally by pointing out that the embedded quoted speech act in (4) harmonizes with the matrix clause in (4a) but not in (4b).

- (4) a. Lina wants to know/wonders: "What is your name?"  
b. \* Lina knows/announces: "What is your name[?/.]"

Consider now the following cases. The *remind-me* reading is not possible in (5). We might say that *forget* does not subcategorize (let us say) for an embedded speech act. However, (6) is fine and (7) is also fairly good.

- (5) Gestern hatte er schon vergessen, was (#noch mal) ihr Name war.  
yesterday had he already forgotten, what (again) her name was  
'Yesterday he had already forgotten what her name was (#again).'
- (6) Ich habe vergessen, was (noch mal) Ihr Name war.  
I have forgotten what (again) your. POLITE name was  
'I have forgotten what your name was (again).'

- (7) Er sagte zu ihr, dass er vergessen habe, was (noch mal) ihr Name war.  
 he said to her that he forgotten has what (again) her name was  
 ‘He told her that he has forgotten what her name was (again).’

In a speech situation as in (6) and (7), X telling Y that X forgot Y’s name can come with the understanding that X is thereby asking what Y’s name is. An additional questioning speech act is there by a contextual inference. This suggests that what is more generally relevant is the entailment that there is a questioning speech act. This could be captured in terms of the contribution of Imp2-CG as a post-supposition (see e.g. Brasoveanu 2013). A sketch of this idea is given in (8).

- (8) Where  $CP_Q$  is an interrogative and  $\llbracket CP_Q \rrbracket^{w,t}$  the set of its true answers at  $t$  in  $w$ ,  
 $\llbracket \text{Imp2-CG } CP_Q \rrbracket^{w,t} = \llbracket CP_Q \rrbracket^{w,t}$   
 if  $ask(w, t, \llbracket CP_Q \rrbracket^{w,t})$  is entailed, which may be verified after the compositional process.

Here *ask* is a shorthand for the meaning assigned in steps to Imp2-CG by Sauerland and Yatsushiro.

In (1)/(2),  $ask(w, t, \llbracket CP_Q \rrbracket^{w,t})$  is entailed by the facts of  $w$ , i.e. by the speaker performing the question act, with  $w$  the world of the utterance and  $t$  the speech time. In the other examples, (8) is applied to an embedded clause  $[\text{Imp2-CG } CP_Q]$ , with  $w$  and  $t$  as the parameters of evaluation of the matrix clause. In (3a) and, with the contextual inference, in (6) and (7), the truth of the entire sentence entails  $ask(w, t, \llbracket CP_Q \rrbracket^{w,t})$ . The post-supposition of embedded  $[\text{Imp2-CG } CP_Q]$  is thus satisfied, and Imp2-CG allows a *remind-me* reading. In (3b) and (5), no question act is independently provided at any level. Therefore Imp2-CG cannot be present and a *remind-me* reading cannot come about.

For the quotes within (4a,b), let  $\llbracket \text{Imp2-CG } CP_Q \rrbracket^{w,t}$  be their interpretation, with Imp2-CG part of the quoted clause and with  $w$  and  $t$  parameters the matrix clause. (8) then allows (4a) but not (4b).

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